



MEMORANDUM

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From: Mary Kate Morookian
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Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Date: February 23, 2025

Subject: Link Transit TDP Update

TDP UPDATE

Link Transit is currently developing a 5-year Transit Development Plan (TDP) and Facility Study to evaluate the current transit system's performance and provide service recommendations including potential system expansions and facility improvements. The recommendations were developed with the goal of improving the customer experience, supporting necessary expansions in transit service, bus fleet, and staffing needs. The study evaluates the existing transit system and facility needs to examine how the agency can best serve passengers and improve efficiency.

An overview of Phase I and Phase II efforts, including next steps, are summarized below followed by a summary of route recommendations and the facility search process.

Phase I

Transit Development Plan

Phase I of the TDP and Facility Study began in the Fall of 2023 with an analysis of existing conditions, system performance, and Phase I of community engagement. The [Existing Conditions Assessment](#) provides an overview of Link Transit, including history, governance, organizational structure, financials, relevant planning documents, existing services (fixed-route and paratransit) and facilities, service performance, and previous public involvement efforts. An evaluation of demographic, socioeconomic, and travel demand trends was conducted to better understand needs and gaps across the current service network and identify opportunities to better serve transit markets with increased frequency, new service delivery models, and expanded service. Below are the key takeaways from Phase I:

- Increased service frequency is a priority for the public and community stakeholders
- Improved connections between Link Transit Routes and other regional services would improve the usability and convenience of the network
- Amenities like public restrooms, customer service/ticket counter, and passenger waiting room are high priorities

Facility Feasibility Study

During Phase I, the project team advanced a facility study, examining the feasibility of a new Transit Passenger Transfer Hub and Operations & Maintenance Facility (O&M). Link Transit currently operates all routes curbside, in downtown Burlington. Buses meet at the designated curb space to facilitate transfers between routes, however there are minimal customer and operator amenities/comfort facilities.

Link Transit contracts with a service provider that leases space for their O&M facility which means ongoing operating costs paid for by Link Transit. This means any facility modifications, renovations, expansions, or adjustments to the facility are not possible without contract amendments. A permanent transfer hub facility and new, agency-owned O&M Facility are needed to support future system expansion and optimize operational efficiency and fleet storage and maintenance needs. During Phase I, the study team developed a facility program and documented site space needs, conducted a site search and evaluation, and initial site concept development.

The facility study evaluated potential sites for the transfer hub and O&M facility based on search criteria developed in partnership with staff through site programming exercises. The programming exercises were conducted to ensure a future space would be large enough to include desired customer amenities and operator comfort facilities (expressed during Phase I public engagement) and support necessary staff activities.

Phase II

Phase II of the project began in Spring of 2024 with the development of route recommendations based on the existing conditions assessment, initial community feedback, and coordination with key stakeholders and elected officials. These route recommendations were finalized in January of 2025 and the study team is currently conducting Phase II community engagement efforts to present and confirm recommendations with the community and key community stakeholders. Focus group discussions with major employers, neighboring communities, and community organizations. The purpose of this round of engagement is to confirm service priorities with the public and other stakeholders, gather feedback on potential service recommendations and potential tradeoffs, and have conversations with key stakeholders surrounding a potential new facility.

Next Steps

- Council to confirm locally preferred alternative for Transit Hub and O&M Facilities
- Project Team to refine and finalize route recommendations
- Project Team to develop site concept plans for locally preferred alternatives
- Project Team to finalize Title VI Analysis for facility recommendations
- Staff to prepare federal grant application to acquire federal funding match for procurement, site planning and design, and construction activities

TDP AND ROUTE RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The study team developed recommendations based on an analysis of current system performance and travel demand trends. Figure 1 shows ridership demand by route, with Purple and Red routes having the highest ridership. The Red Route currently serves high demand destinations like the Garden Rd Walmart and Cone Health Alamance Regional. The Purple Route serves the North Park Library and the Walmart off N Mebane St. The Green Route has the lowest ridership and serves a very low-density, semi-rural area north of downtown Burlington.

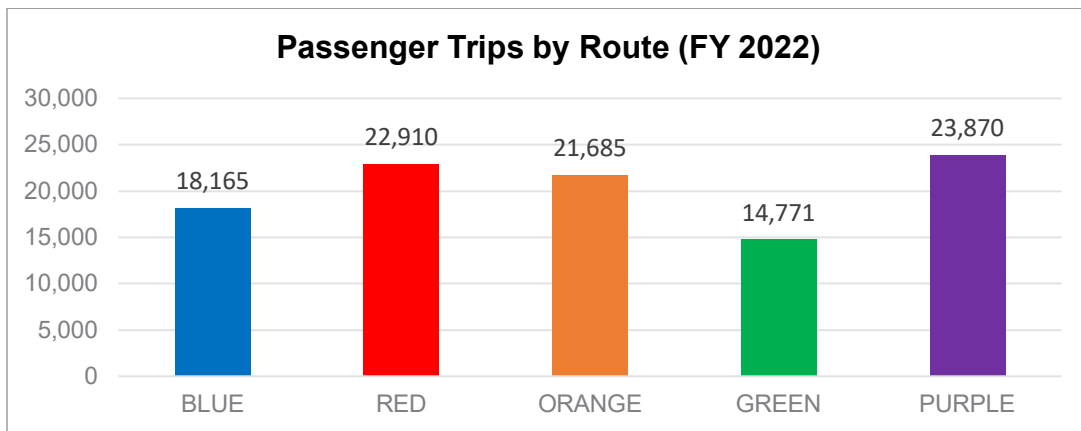


Figure 1: Ridership Demand by Route

Figure 2 illustrates concentration of populations, employment centers, and specific demographic groups (zero vehicle households, elderly populations, low-income households, disabled populations, and racial and ethnic minorities) that can indicate a need or a likelihood that transit would be utilized in a particular area.

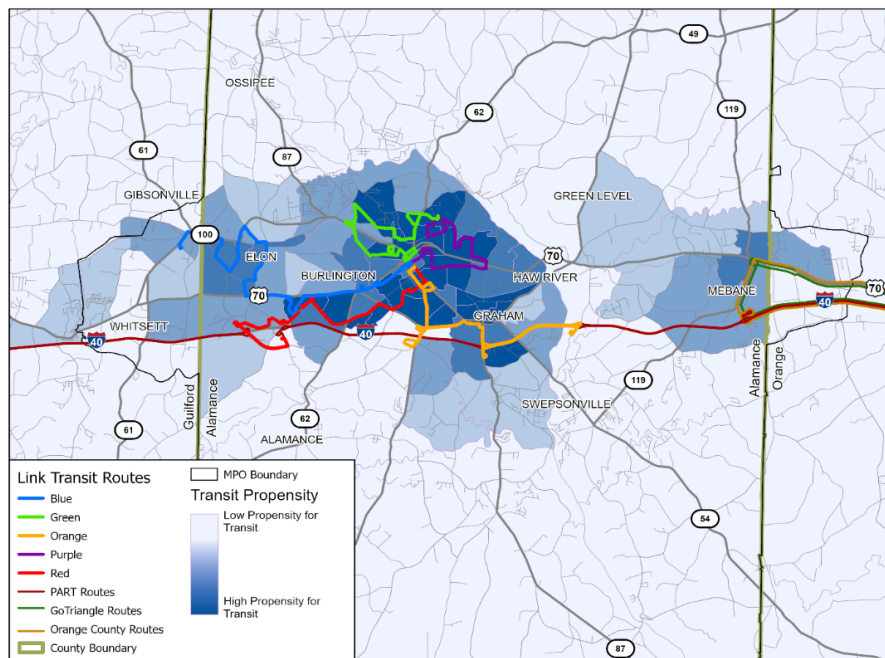


Figure 2: Transit Propensity

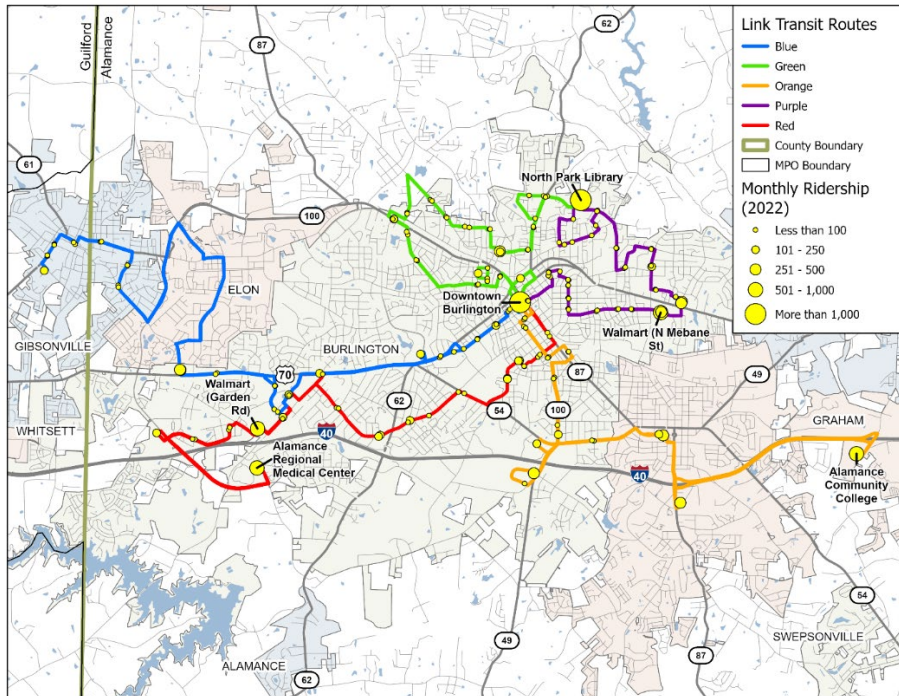


Figure 3: Link Transit Ridership by Stop

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of ridership across the service network. In addition to documenting areas of potential need, general travel demand data was utilized to evaluate where there may be unserved or underserved travel markets. Using Replica data—a third party data platform utilizing travel information sourced from GPS-enabled devices—the study team documented areas with a high concentration of trip destinations across all modes (biking, walking, personal vehicle, transit, etc.). Figure 4 shows the results of the Replica travel demand analysis.

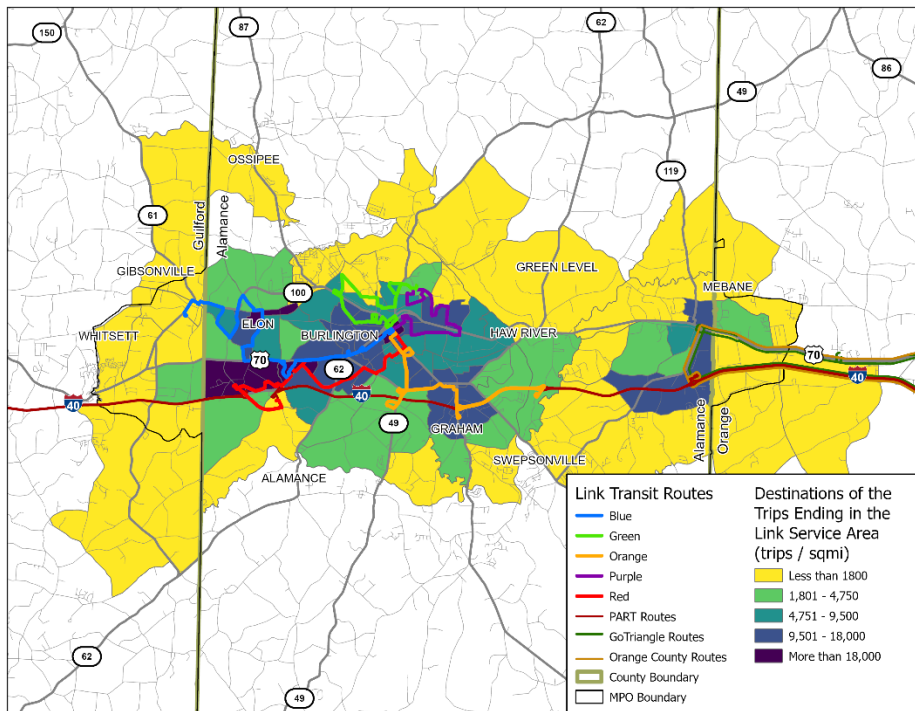


Figure 4: Travel Demand Across Service Network

Through this analysis, the study team identified needs, gaps, and opportunities within the existing service network. The service analysis provided the basis for service recommendations across the Link Transit network, addressing transit and mobility needs and service performance goals.

Overall, Link Transit does a good job of covering high need and demand areas. Some service gaps were identified that could be addressed with route realignment and alternative service delivery models. Potential service gaps were identified north of the Green Route, and in East Burlington, south of N Mebane St, in the areas surrounding S Graham Hopedale Rd and Main St, leading into downtown Graham.

The following goals were established to provide the basis for developing service and route recommendations:

- Streamline routes to reduce trip times and investigate alternative service delivery methods
- Create slight modifications to provide 60-minute frequencies and improve transfers where possible
- Maximize connectivity of the system

To improve service frequencies and expand service coverage, efficiencies were found within the existing operating budget and operating dollars redistributed from low performing routes to high performing routes or areas of higher need. The study team examined stop-by-stop ridership across the system to evaluate portions of route alignments to be streamlined, making routes faster and more direct to achieve 60-minute frequencies where possible. When evaluating average weekday ridership, the Green Route carries roughly 43 people per weekday, or three passengers per hour. The geographic area covered by the Green Route is lower density but also has high transit propensity due to other demographic and

socioeconomic factors. This provides an opportunity for a successful application of a modified service type—on demand transit service--providing passengers with more flexibility and allowing Link Transit to improve efficiency while still meeting demand.

The current route proposal shows an agency-operated on demand service branded as Link+ to serve remaining passengers and an adjustment to the Purple Route alignment covering high demand stops on the Green Route. Link Transit's paratransit service has existing capacity (it serves roughly 7,000 passengers per year compared to the fixed route's roughly 165,000 annual riders) to absorb the Green Route's existing passengers that will not be served with the adjusted Purple Route.

Other recommendations involve shortening and straightening routes to allow a 60-minute service frequency where possible. These recommendations are cost-neutral and would not require additional vehicles. The project team is conducting community engagement to obtain community feedback on the following route recommendations:

- **Red Route 1** – Route alignment would be updated to be more direct and allow service to run every 60-minutes instead of every 90-minutes as it does currently. The route would operate between the downtown Burlington transfer hub and terminate at the Garden Road Walmart where riders could transfer to the new Pink Route 7, or Blue Route 3, to access Cone Health Alamance Regional.
- **Orange Route 2** –Buses would continue to operate every 90 minutes, providing connections to downtown Graham, Alamance Community College, and Mebane. If funding becomes available to support a future Yellow Route 6 connection to downtown Graham, the Orange Route alignment would be adjusted to provide more direct connections to Alamance Community College and Mebane. Service to Graham destinations and the Alamance County Courthouse would be provided by the Yellow Route 6.
- **Blue Route 3** – The route would operate between Cone Health Alamance Regional and Gibsonville via Elon with connections to Elon University and the Garden Road Walmart for timed transfers to Red Route 1 and new Pink Route 7 for travel to downtown Burlington. The route would operate every 60-minutes instead of 90-minutes.
- **Green Route 4** – Portions of the Green Route would be replaced with an on-demand van service, operated as a 1-year pilot program, called Link+. Passengers would book rides on an as-needed basis using an app or by phone. Link+ would operate in northwest Burlington where Green Route 4 currently operates. The Purple Route would be adjusted to serve high demand Green Route stops, like Lakeside Apartments to maintain some level of fixed route bus service. There is existing capacity in the paratransit service that would allow for Link+ to be provided within the existing operating budget.
- **Purple Route 5** – The route will be adjusted to provide more direct service to the North Park Library operate between Downtown Burlington and the Mebane Street Walmart, with service to the Lakeside Apartments. The route would operate every 60 minutes instead of 90.
- **NEW Yellow Route 6**
 - Option 1: The route would operate between downtown Burlington via S Graham Hopedale Road and Main St to Alamance County Office Building and Alamance Courthouse and remove these destinations from Orange Route 2. The route would operate every 60 minutes.
 - Option 2: If funding were to become available, a later implementation phase of the Yellow Route 6 would operate between Downtown Burlington and Haw River with connections

to Purple Route 5 at the Mebane Street Walmart. This route would operate every 60 minutes.

- NEW Pink Route 7** – This route would operate between downtown Burlington and Garden Road Walmart via Church Street and Sellers Mill Road, providing a direct connection to Cone Health Alamance Regional from downtown Burlington, and timed connections to Red Route 1 and Blue Route 3. This route would operate every 60 minutes.

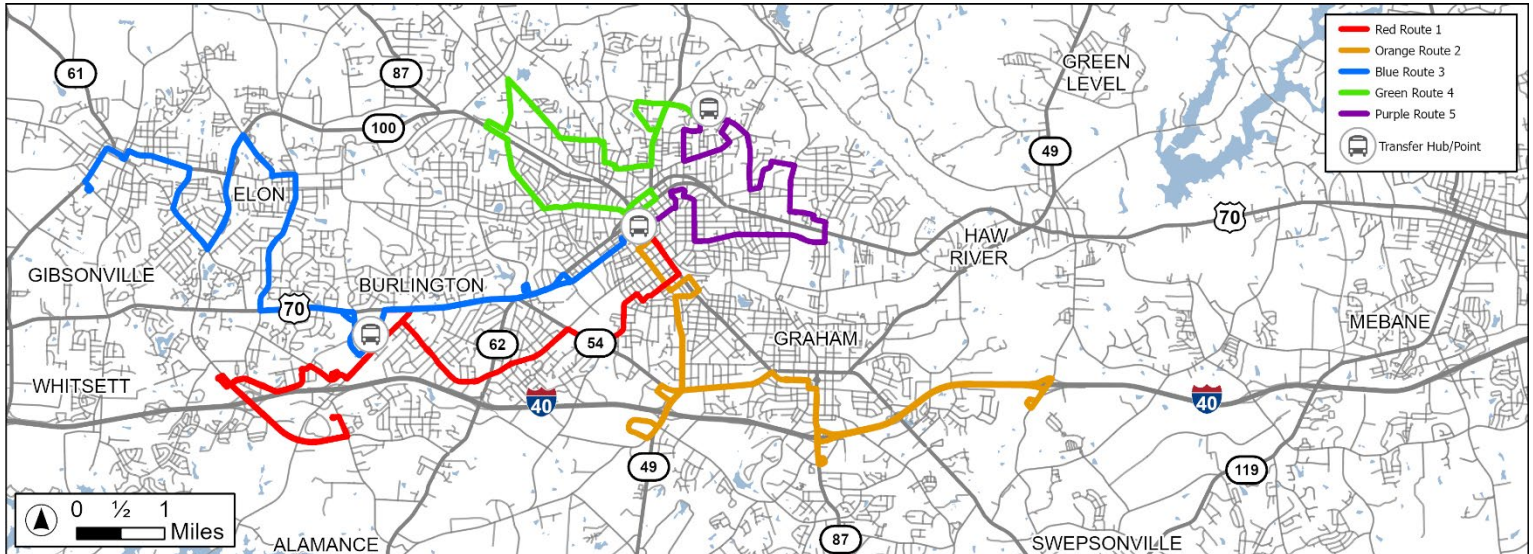


Figure 5: Current Link Transit Network

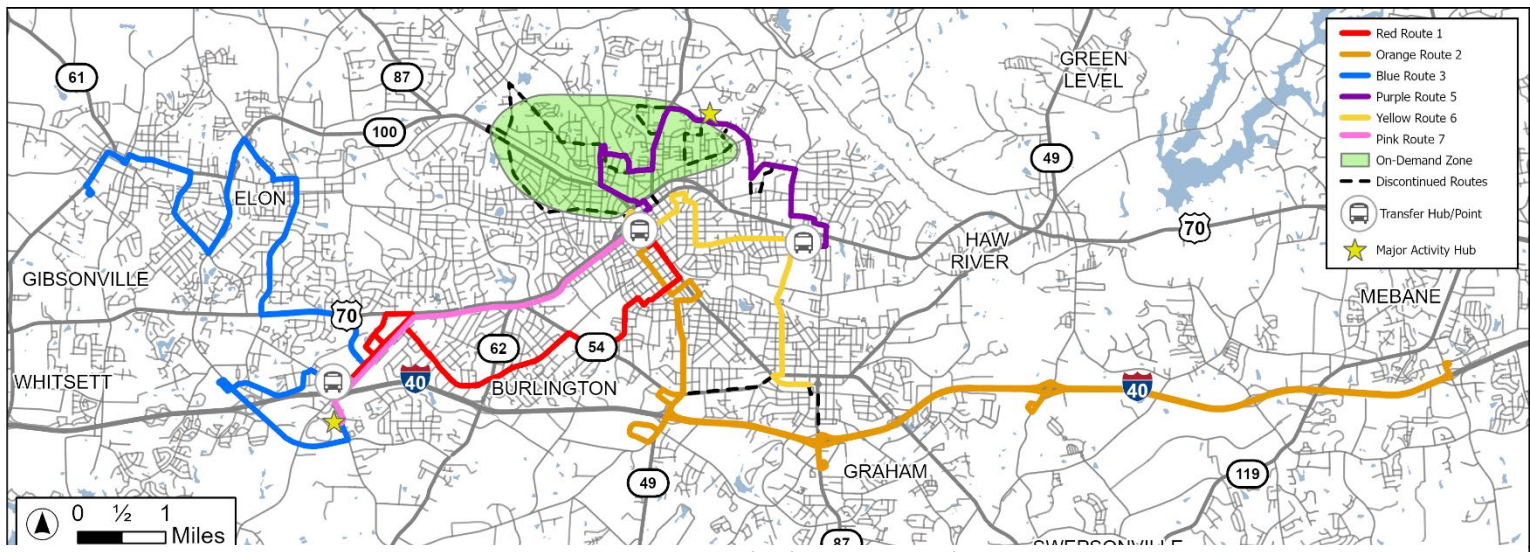


Figure 6: Proposed Link Transit Network

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

To improve customer amenities and operational efficiency, a planning effort was launched to examine potential new locations for a new Operations and Maintenance Facility and Transfer Center. Programming and operational requirements were documented in partnership with Link Transit staff and used in the development of site search criteria for an alternative site location. Initial site search requirements prioritized a site large enough to accommodate a joint O&M and Transfer Center; however, lack of adequate size parcels within the desired search area and within a reasonable distance from downtown Burlington expanded the search to consider separate parcels for each facility type.

1) Goal Development

Link Transit staff and the consultant team met on March 7th, 2024 in a kickoff meeting to confirm study goals and help frame the basis for alternative site selection within the defined search area. The following study goals were used when developing evaluation metrics for potential sites.

- Operational Efficiency
- Ease of Acquisition and Constructability
- Accessibility
- Community Benefits

2) Search Area Process

To identify viable parcels as potential locations for the future Link Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility (O&M) and Transfer Center, a methodological approach was established using GIS data and ArcGIS analysis tools. This process was completed with three rounds of data analysis that each further refined the search criteria and reduced the number of viable parcels. During the final round, viable parcels were identified using the following criteria:

- Applicable Zoning
- Transfer Center only: 1.2+ acres within ½ mile of existing Transfer Center
- O&M or Joint Transfer Center and O&M: 3+ acres within 1 mile of existing Transfer Center

3) Parcel Screening Process

To create a manageable pool of potential parcels to evaluate for the future Link Transit O&M and Transfer Center, parcels were eliminated during three rounds of searches through a manual review and then evaluated using a number of resources including Google Maps, GIS data, and local real estate data.

Screening criteria included:

- No apparent active use (using Google Maps, in-person site visit, and local real estate knowledge)
- Size layout would accommodate required operational elements
- Nearby land use complements planned use (i.e., Transfer Center near key destinations, O&M near other industrial uses)
- Property was not recently sold (using local real estate knowledge)
- Link Transit staff support

Once a final pool of parcels was identified, the project team held coordination meetings with City staff, key stakeholders, and local real commercial real estate partners to discuss the remaining parcels and

document any additional site-specific information. During this process, several sites were eliminated due to development plans, potential required environmental mitigation, and ease of acquisition. The final pool of potential parcels to be evaluated included three potential sites for the Transfer Hub and two potential sites for the O&M Facility.

4) Site Evaluation Process

Evaluation metrics were developed to compare potential sites and identify which are the most viable. The effort to evaluate and score each potential site allowed for a data-driven, quantifiable comparison between sites.

The indicators used to evaluate each of the goals include operational efficiency, ease of acquisition and constructability, accessibility, and surrounding community benefits. Each indicator was given a score of 1 to 5, with 1 being the worst and 5 being the best. Indicators were not assigned weights to indicate relative importance over another category.

Table 1 shows the final results of the site evaluation matrix scoring process.

Matrix Framework		Parcels				
		Transfer Center			O&M	
Goals	Indicator	Parcel No. 1	Parcel No. 2	Parcel No. 3	Parcel No. 4	Parcel No. 5
Operational Efficiency	Proximity to existing Transfer Center	5	5	5	4	5
	Ease of Acquisition and Constructability	Listed for sale or publicly owned	1	5	1	1
Planned for redevelopment		1	1	1	1	1
Existing structures		1	4	1	4	1
Estimated market cost per acre		4	4	3	4	1 ¹
Accessibility	Number of jobs within ½ mile	5	5	5	n/a	n/a
	Population within ½ mile	1	5	4	n/a	n/a
	Access to sidewalks	3	5	5	n/a	n/a
	Access to public facilities/key destinations	4	4	4	n/a	n/a
Community	Land use within 1 mile	5	5	5	5	5
	Proximity to potential future development	5	3	5	n/a	n/a
	Minority population within ¼ mile	5	5	4	1	5
	Hispanic/Latino Population within ¼ mile	1	4	1	1	1
	Low-income Households within ¼ mile	4	4	1	4	4
	Zero Vehicle Households within ¼ mile	5	5	4	4	1
Final Score		51	65	50	29	25

Table 1: Link Transit Transfer Center and Operations and Maintenance Facility Evaluation Matrix

¹ This estimate includes demolition but does not include anticipated abatement

5) Final Sites

The outcomes of the site evaluation matrix were considered along with staff feedback and a Title VI Analysis. The Title VI Analysis was completed for all five final sites, assessing potential impacts to minority and/or low-income populations related to the placement of the potential Transfer Center and O&M facilities. No disparate impacts were noted in the analysis for the Transfer Center. However, the analysis identified Parcel No. 5 could potentially have an impact on both minority and low-income populations within close proximity to the site compared to the existing site.

The Title VI Analysis, along with the site evaluation, support Parcel No. 4 as the preferred site for the O&M facility. The project team recommends Parcel No. 2 as the preferred alternative for the Transfer Center due to its location, existing public ownership, and preferred site layout.

6) Next Steps

The project team requests Council's concurrence on the locally preferred alternative for both the new downtown transfer hub and the O&M Facility. Once the locally preferred alternative is selected, the project team will finalize the Title VI Analysis, develop more detailed site concept plans, and create an implementation plan that includes cost estimates and a timeline of necessary steps including NEPA and federal grant application preparation.